

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the
Central District of California

In the Matter of the Search of
*Four United States Postal Service Parcels in the
custody of the USPS in Los Angeles, California*

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Case No. 2:23-MJ-6402

APPLICATION FOR A WARRANT BY TELEPHONE OR OTHER RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS

I, a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government, request a search warrant and state under penalty of perjury that I have reason to believe that on the following person or property

See Attachment A

located in the Central District of California, there is now concealed

See Attachment B

The basis for the search under Fed. R. Crim. P. 41(c) is

- ☒ evidence of a crime;
- ☒ contraband, fruits of crime, or other items illegally possessed;
- ☒ property designed for use, intended for use, or used in committing a crime;
- ☐ a person to be arrested or a person who is unlawfully restrained.

The search is related to a violation of:

| <i>Code Section</i> | <i>Offense Description</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1) | distribution and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance |
| 21 U.S.C. § 846 | conspiracy to distribute or possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance |
| 21 U.S.C. § 843(b) | unlawful use of a communication facility, including the mails, to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance |

The application is based on these facts:

See attached Affidavit

☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

☐ Delayed notice of _____ days (give exact ending date if more than 30 days: _____) is requested under 18 U.S.C. § 3103a, the basis of which is set forth on the attached sheet.

/s/ Wilford Claiborne

Applicant's signature

Wilford Claiborne, USPS Postal Inspector

Printed name and title

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone.

Date: _____

Judge's signature

City and state: Los Angeles, CA

U.S. Magistrate Judge Charles Eick

Printed name and title

AUSA: K. Afia Bondero (x2435)

ATTACHMENT A

PARCELS TO BE SEARCHED

The following United States Postal Service ("USPS") parcels, collectively, the "SUBJECT PARCELS," seized from the mail stream between December 7 and 8, 2023, and currently in the custody of the United States Postal Inspection Service, at the USPIS Office located at 1055 N Vignes in Los Angeles, California:

SUBJECT PARCEL 1 is a white Priority mail flat rate envelope. The tracking number associated to it is 9405536206248796764243. The return address is "PM PERCUSSION 405 6TH ST PETALUMA CA 94952." The intended recipient is listed as "ELI COHEN 5632 VAN UYS BLVD SHERMAN OAKS CA 91401-4602."

SUBJECT PARCEL 2 is a white Priority Express bubble mailer. The tracking number associated to it is EI912442186US. The return address is "Joshua Devericks 114 w hand ave #1L wildwood NJ 08260." The intended recipient is listed as "Eli Cohen PMB #2242 5632 Van Nuys Blvd Sherman Oaks, CA 91401."

SUBJECT PARCEL 3 is a white USPS Priority Express box. The tracking number associated to it is EI491239350US. The return address is "Lisa Mitchell 102 Segars Court TROY, AL 36081." The intended recipient is listed as "Eli Cohen PMB #2242 5632 Van Nuys Blvd Sherman Oaks, CA 91401."

SUBJECT PARCEL 4 is a white USPS Priority Express paper mailer. The tracking number associated to it is EI029181729US. The return address is "JaShua Devericks 114 w hand ave wildwood NJ 08260" The intended recipient is listed as "Eil cohen PMB#2242 5632 Van Nuys Blvd Sherman Oaks, CA 91401."

ATTACHMENT B

ITEMS TO BE SEIZED

The following items are to be seized from the parcels described in Attachment A, which constitute evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities of violations of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) (distribution and possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance), 846 (conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance) and 843(b) (unlawful use of a communication facility, including the mails, to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance):

- a. Any controlled substances;
- b. Currency, money orders, bank checks, or similar monetary instruments in quantities over \$1,000; and
- c. Packaging material.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Wilford Claiborne, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I am a United States Postal Inspector with the United States Postal Inspection Service ("USPIS") Los Angeles Division, in Los Angeles, California, and have been so employed since August 2013. From August 2013 until November 2017, I was assigned to the Los Angeles Mail Theft Team. I am currently assigned to the Prohibited Mailing and Illegal Narcotics Team. I have completed a twelve-week Postal Inspector Basic Training course, which included training in the investigation of drug distribution via the U.S. mail. I have conducted numerous investigations into drug distribution and money laundering involving the U.S. mail. I am familiar with the ways in which drug distributors use the mail system to transport drugs and drug proceeds.

II. PURPOSE OF AFFIDAVIT

2. This affidavit is made in support of an application for a search warrant for United States Postal Service ("USPS") Parcels 9405536206248796764243 (herein referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL 1"), EI912442186US (herein referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL 2"), EI491239350US (herein referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL 3"), and EI029181729US (herein referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL 4"), collectively referred to as the "SUBJECT PARCELS". The SUBJECT PARCELS are in the custody of the USPIS, as described more fully in Attachment A, which is incorporated by reference. The

requested search warrant seeks authorization to seize evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities of violations of 21 U.S.C.

§§ 841(a)(1) (distribution and possession with intent to distribute controlled substances), 846 (conspiracy and attempt to distribute controlled substances), and 843(b) (unlawful use of a communication facility, including the mails, to facilitate the distribution of a controlled substance) (the "Subject Offenses"), as described more fully in Attachment B, which is also incorporated by reference.

3. The facts set forth in this affidavit are based upon my personal observations, my training and experience, and information obtained from various law enforcement personnel and witnesses. This affidavit is intended to show merely that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested search warrant and does not purport to set forth all of my knowledge of or investigation into this matter. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all conversations and statements described in this affidavit are related in substance and in part only.

III. SUMMARY OF PROBABLE CAUSE

4. Samuel Eli COHEN (herein referred to as "COHEN") is under investigation for federal violations related to trafficking narcotics, specifically fentanyl. On or about December 7, 2023, United States Postal Inspectors obtained and then executed a federal search warrant at the residence of COHEN. See 2:23-MJ-6198. The Postal Inspectors found cocaine, bulk United States currency, and other suspected illegal drugs.

5. While interviewing COHEN, I presented him with two US Mail parcels that I suspected contained evidence related to COHEN's drug trafficking activity. The parcels were addressed to COHEN utilizing a commercial mail receiving agency address. COHEN gave verbal and written consent to open the parcels during a recorded interview. I opened the parcels, and they contained \$7,000.00 and \$1,100.00 cash.

6. Upon the conclusion of the search warrant at the COHEN residence, I became aware of four additional parcels addressed to COHEN's same commercial mail receiving agency address. Based on previous activity and the COHEN interview, I believe the parcels contain addition cash that is likely the proceeds of trafficking narcotics.

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBABLE CAUSE

A. Background on Use of Mails for Drug Trafficking

7. Based on my training and experience as a Postal Inspector, and the experiences related to me by fellow Postal Inspectors who specialize in drug investigations, I know the following:

a. Los Angeles is a major source area for drugs. As such, drugs are frequently transported from Los Angeles via the U.S. Mail, and the proceeds from drug sales are frequently returned to Los Angeles through the U.S. Mail. These proceeds are generally in the form of money orders, bank checks, or similar monetary instruments in an amount over \$1,000.00. Based on my training and experience, I know that proceeds from the

sale of drugs often contain the odor of drugs because they have been contaminated by or associated with the odor of one or more drugs.

8. The following indicia suggest that a parcel may contain drugs or drug distribution proceeds:

a. The parcel is contained in a box, flat cardboard mailer, or Tyvek envelope;

b. The parcel bears a typed label, whether USPS Express Mail or Priority Mail;

c. The handwritten label on the parcel does not contain a business account number;

d. The seams of the parcel are taped or glued shut;

e. Multiple parcels are mailed by the same individual, on the same day to different locations; and/or

f. The return and recipient address information are inaccurate or nonexistent. Oftentimes drug smugglers will use fake names, addresses, or a combination of both, in order to conceal their true identities.

9. Parcels exhibiting such indicia may be the subject of further investigation, which may include verification of the recipient and sender. I know from my training and experience that drug traffickers often use fictitious or incomplete names and addresses in an effort to conceal their identities from law enforcement officers investigating these types of cases.

10. I also know from my training and experience that people often utilize their residence to store drugs and to

receive proceeds from the sale of drugs shipped via the U.S. Mail.

B. A Parcel Addressed to COHEN Contained Fentanyl

11. On or about June 21, 2023, a United States Postal Inspection Service Task Force Officer applied for and received search warrant 2:23-MJ-03111 from United States Magistrate Judge the Honorable Brianna Fuller Mircheff to open a parcel addressed to "Samuel Eli Cohen" (herein referred to as "COHEN") at PO Box 24935 in Los Angeles, California 90024-0935. This parcel included multiple types of pills including approximately 475 grams of fentanyl pills according to lab testing performed by the Postal Inspection Service's Forensic Laboratory.

a. A PO Box is a Post Office mailbox, typically located within a Post Office. A PO Box is rented by an applicant and requires an application to be filed, payment of rental fees, and identification used to verify the identity of the potential renter.

b. The parcel's destination address was to a PO Box located within the Village Post Office located in Westwood, California.

12. Utilizing postal business records, I reviewed the Post Office mailbox application for PO Box 24935 in Los Angeles, California 90024-0935 and learned the Post Office mailbox was registered to COHEN. Additionally, from the business record, I obtained a California driver's license number for COHEN. Utilizing CLEAR, a database used by law enforcement to assist in

identifying people, addresses, and other identifying information, I learned COHEN was associated with an apartment located at 660 Veteran Ave, Apt 323 in Westwood, California 90024.

C. COHEN Mails Three Parcels Containing Marijuana

a. On or about September 1, 2023, COHEN went into the Village Post Office in Westwood, California and mailed USPS Parcels LZ263321625US, LZ263322838US, and LZ238759286US, collectively referred to as the "THREE PARCELS." I received federal search warrant 2:23-MJ-04627 from the Honorable Maria A. Audero. The THREE PARCELS were found to contain a total of approximately 3,737 gross grams of marijuana.

D. COHEN Receives Additional Parcels At A New Address

13. After the seizure of the THREE PARCELS, postal business records reflect COHEN obtaining a new mailing address of 5632 Van Nuys Boulevard, Sherman Oaks, California 91401, PMB #2242. This address is to a business also referred to as a commercial mail receiving agency (herein referred to as a "CMRA").

a. A CMRA is a business which has been authorized by the US Postal Service to receive mail on behalf of individuals or businesses. CMRAs differentiate what mail belongs to a particular customer by assigning private mailbox (also known as "PMB") numbers. COHEN was assigned private mailbox number "PMB 2242."

14. With the knowledge of COHEN's use of the CMRA, on or about December 5, 2023, I went to the Van Nuys Post Office to view mail addressed to COHEN. While at the post office, I observed two parcels addressed to COHEN. The two parcels were USPS parcels 9505513243413334334092 (the "4092 PARCEL") and 9405537903244999906124 (the "6124 Parcel") collectively referred to as the "CONSENT PARCELS").

15. The CONSENT PARCELS were suspicious because they both were from out of state (New York and Virginia) and utilized COHEN's new address.

E. A Search Warrant is Executed At COHEN's Residence

16. On or about December 6, 2023, I received federal search warrant 2:23-MJ-6198 from the Honorable Jean Rosenbluth for COHEN's residence located at 3480 2nd Avenue in Los Angeles, California 90018 (the "COHEN RESIDENCE").

17. On or about December 7, 2023, United States Postal Inspectors with the assistance of California Department of Justice State Agents executed the search warrant at the COHEN RESIDENCE. While at the residence, law enforcement located empty pill capsules typically used by narcotics dealers to fill with illegal drugs for sale, digital scales, and bulk cash amounting to approximately \$25,609.00. Additionally, law enforcement found illegal narcotics such as 1,978 gross grams of Psilocybin also known as mushrooms, 74 gross grams of cocaine, 43 gross grams of pills labeled as alprazolam also commonly known as Xanax, and other pills.

18. During a mirandized recorded interview COHEN gave law enforcement verbal consent and later signed a written consent to search form for the CONSENT PARCELS. The CONSENT PARCELS were opened in COHEN's presence and found to contain \$7,000.00 and \$1,100.00 cash.

19. During the mirandized interview COHEN stated he was told by a co-conspirator to apply for a private mailbox at the CMRA. COHEN stated he was instructed to do this because of the seizure of the THREE PARCELS which contained marijuana. COHEN stated he would take the incoming parcels to co-conspirators known and unknown after he retrieved them from the CMRA.

F. Notification of FOUR PARCELS Addressed to COHEN

20. On December 7, 2023, after the conclusion of the search at the COHEN RESIDENCE, the manager of the CMRA notified me that the CMRA had received two USPS mail pieces addressed to COHEN. I retrieved the two mail pieces and observed the following information:

a. One mail piece was shipped USPS Priority mail with tracking number 9405536206248796764243 (the "SUBJECT PARCEL 1"). SUBJECT PARCEL 1 has a listed return address of "PM PERCUSSION 405 6TH ST PETALUMA CA 94952" The destination address was listed as "ELI COHEN 5632 VAN UYS BLVD SHERMAN OAKS CA 91401-4602," also known as the CMRA ADDRESS.

b. The second mail piece was shipped USPS Priority Express with tracking number EI912442186US (the "SUBJECT PARCEL 2"). SUBJECT PARCEL 2 had a listed return address of "Joshua

Devericks 114 w hand ave #1L wildwood NJ 08260." The destination address was listed as "Eli Cohen PMB #2242 5632 Van Nuys Blvd Sherman Oaks, CA 91401."

21. On or about December 8, 2023, I received a call from the Van Nuys Post Office regarding two parcels addressed to COHEN at the CMRA. I retrieved the two parcels and observed the following information:

a. One parcel was shipped USPS Priority Express with tracking number EI491239350US (herein referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL 3"). SUBJECT Parcel 3 had a listed return address of "Lisa Mitchell 102 Segars Court TROY, AL 36081." The destination address was listed as "Eli Cohen PMB #2242 5632 Van Nuys Blvd Sherman Oaks, CA 91401."

b. The Second mail piece was shipped USPS Priority Express with tracking number EI029181729US (herein referred to as "SUBJECT PARCEL 4"). SUBJECT Parcel 4 has a listed return address of "JaShua Devericks 114 w hand ave wildwood NJ 08260." The listed destination address was listed as "Eil cohen PMB#2242 5632 Van Nuys Blvd Sherman Oaks, CA 91401."

22. SUBJECT PARCEL 1, SUBJECT PARCEL 2, SUBJECT PARCEL 3, and SUBJECT PARCEL 4, collectively referred to as the SUBJECT PARCELS were all seized and are currently in the possession of the United States Postal Inspection Service.

V. CONCLUSION

12. For all the reasons above, I believe COHEN is utilizing his address at the CMRA to receive proceeds, through

the United States mail, for the sale of narcotics and there is probable cause to believe that the SUBJECT PARCELS, as described in Attachment A, contains evidence, fruits, and instrumentalities of violations of the Subject Offenses, as described in Attachment B.

Attested to by the applicant in accordance with the requirements of Fed. R. Crim. P. 4.1 by telephone on this ____ day of December 2023.

HONORABLE CHARLES EICK
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE